DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 314 415 SP 031 928

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TITLE Educational Reform and the Future Direction of Teacher Education.
PUB DATE Oct 89
NOTE 12p.; Paper presented at the American Teacher Educators Mid-America Conference (Kingston/Durant, OK, October 4-6, 1989).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Admission Criteria; Beginning Teachers; *Educational Change; *Educational Quality; Elementary Secondary Education; *Excellence in Education; Higher Education; Mentors; Minority Group Teachers; *Program Improvement; Schools of Education; Teacher Certification; *Teacher Education; Teaching Experience
IDENTIFIERS Beginning Teacher Induction

ABSTRACT

This paper reviews the major educational reform literature to identify commonalities of ways in which the reform movement is bringing changes to teacher education programs. The literature reviewed includes: (1) "A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform"; (2) "Tomorrow's Teachers: A Report of the Holmes Group"; (3) "A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century"; (4) "Time for Results: The Governor's 1991 Report on Education"; and (5) "American Education: Making it Work: A Report to the President and the American People". Ways in which the reform movement is bringing changes to teacher education include: (1) elevation of standards; (2) reorganization of programs; (3) increasing clinical experiences; (4) stricter certification requirements; (5) mounting concerns regarding minority teachers; and (6) pairing and inducting issues. (Author/JD)

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EDUCATIONAL REFORM AND THE FUTURE DIRECTION OF TEACHER EDUCATION

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Kingston/Durant, Oklahoma

October 4-6, 1989

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SP031928

EDUCATIONAL REFORM AND THE FUTURE DIRECTION OF TEACHER EDUCATION

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to review the major educational reform literature and to identify commonalities of ways in which the reform movement is bringing changes to teacher education programs.

The Major Educational Reform Literature reviewed includes:

A. A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform

B. Tomorrows Teachers: A Report of the Holmes Group

C. A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century

D. Time for Results: The Governor's 1991 Report on Education

E. American Education: Making it Work: A Report to the President and the American People

Commonalities of Ways in Which the Reform Movement is Bringing Changes to Teacher Education Programs includes:

A. Elevation of Standards

B. Reorganization of Programs

C. Increasing Clinical Experiences

D. Stricter Certification Requirements

E. Mounting Concerns Regarding Minority Teachers

F. Pairing and Inducting Issues

Because education serves such an important function in our society, it is likely that it will continue to be the focus of considerable scrutiny. The national reports call for changes in the way we prepare teachers in the United States. Teacher educators must not be satisfied with recent progress, but we should grasp every opportunity to improve and to revitalize teacher education. The educational reform movement has given new direction; the profession must assure its continuance.

EDUCATIONAL REFORM AND THE FUTURE DIRECTION OF TEACHER EDUCATION

There is widespread belief that the field of teacher education is on the verge of a major transformation. The nation appears to be increasingly concerned about the qualifications and training of its teachers. A series of special commissions and task forces have indicated that the way in which teachers are prepared is inadequate and have suggested a variety of corrective measures. In an effort to address the criticisms cited in the reports, policy makers at the national, state, and local levels have debated the reports as well as the implications of the proposed changes. As a result, many teachers, principals, and teacher educators are operating under new mandates that are changing the direction of educational practices. The purpose of this paper is to review the major educational reform literature and to identify commonalities of trends which indicate new direction for teacher education programs.

Major Education Reform Literature

A. Although A Nation at Risk: The Imperative For Educational Reform (1983) emphasizes precollegiate educational deficits, the report also calls for the improvement of the preparation of teachers, both academic and pedagogical. Specific recommendations include: (1) higher entrance requirements, (2) less emphasis on "educational methods" at the expense of courses in subjects to be taught, (3) incentives for attracting outstanding teachers into the profession, and (4) the involvement of master teachers in designing teacher preparation programs and in supervising teachers during their probationary years.

B. Tomorrows Teachers: A Report of the Holmes Group (1986) has as its primary aim the reconstruction of the entire education profession--especially teacher education. General goals include (1) making the education of teachers intellectually more solid, (2) creating higher standards of entry to the profession, (3) connecting teacher education institutions to schools, (4) placing emphasis on general/liberal study during the baccalaurate years, and (5) eventually requiring a master's degree in education and a successful year of well supervised internship for prospective career teachers.

The Holmes Group has organized the United States into five regions and in each is embarking upon a series of meetings and projects which are aimed at creating substantive changes through a network of university and school reformers speaking from shared perspective about the kind of education teachers need. Recommendations regarding liberal studies and professional and clinical experiences are expected to emerge from its first major report which is expected in early 1990.

C. The Carnegie Report, published under the title of A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century (1986), calls for numerous reforms in teacher education. Included among these are (1) requiring a bachelor's degree in the arts and sciences prior to the professional study of teaching, (2) creating a National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, and (3) involving teachers more both in planning the curriculum and in governance at all levels of the teacher education process.

D. The National Governors' Association has recently published a report on education which has potential for becoming important--especially because of the power which governors have to influence education in their own states. This report entitled Time for Results: The Governors' 1991 Report on Education(1986) recommends (1) that the states train new teachers to use technology such as computers and robotics as classroom tools, (2) support the creation of a national teacher certification board, (3) eliminate emergency licensing which is sometimes used to alleviate teacher shortages, and (4) develop new ways to attract qualified college graduates to teaching without requiring them to take undergraduate courses in education.

E. The United States Secretary of Education has published reports which contain recommendations for improving education. One of these entitled American Education: Making It Work: A Report to the President and the American People (1988) emphasizes the importance of teachers in the reform movement as well as in the educational process. Change from within is recommended as well as a turning away from externally-imposed regulations. Well-prepared teachers and principals must be at the center of reform. This putting of teachers in the limelight and stressing their importance has caused teacher training institutions to take a closer look at how teachers are prepared in order that they will be qualified to do the best job possible.

As shown by the above-cited examples, a stream of new reports calling for reform in our nation's educational programs continue. Most of these national reports call for change in the way we prepare teachers. An inevitable

recommendation to solve any school problem is to prepare better teachers. A popular belief is that better teachers would help eliminate or solve many school problems. However, it is essential that preservice and inservice improvement occur concurrently; most of the reports recognize the inseparability of the two.

Although the reform movement is relatively recent, already suggested changes have been initiated in many teacher education programs across the nation. The major issues gleaned from the reports include (1) the elevation of standards, (2) program reorganization, (3) increased clinical experiences, (4) stricter certification requirements, (5) mounting concerns regarding minority teachers, and (6) pairing new and experienced teachers.

Examples of Ways the Reform Movement is Bringing Changes to Teacher Education Programs

A. Elevation of Standards

Entrance-level testing for admission to teacher education programs is increasingly being advocated and practiced. Historically, open admission with limited standards gave the public the perception that thousands of unqualified teachers were dumped into the schools. The significance of high enrollment plus the desire to help all prospective teachers succeed often contributed to the erosion of the quality of teachers and the overall profession.

The assessment of exit competencies has also received widespread attention. If students who are admitted to teacher education programs do not perform well and if remediation attempts do not take care of the deficiencies, then prospective teachers are not certified.

National accreditation standards have also been affected by recent reports, recommendations, and efforts to improve student performance and institutional output. The National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher

Education (NCATE), which is perhaps the best single indication of rising standards in teacher education, has developed new standards. These new standards require that teacher education programs use higher entrance requirements and that they offer well-planned teacher education programs.

B. Reorganization of Programs

A recurring theme of the Reform Movement has been the emphasis on more effective general education of teachers. Both Holmes and Carnegie reports recommend strengthening the liberal arts background of teachers and improving the professional courses.

The central issues for program improvement should not be more time in the arts and sciences nor more time in professional education courses but more thorough planning for the integration of the two with better instruction throughout an integrative baccalaureate curriculum.

C. Increasing Clinical Experiences

Experience in the school or on-the-job training has always been an important part of most teacher education programs; however, in the past few years several states have mandated a significant increase in this practical training for prospective teachers.

Clinical work serves many important functions such as helping students decide if they really want to enter the teaching profession, allowing them to see if they have the skills to be suited for teaching, providing opportunity for them to see and to practice in the classroom theories which they learned on campus, and eventually availing them of an opportunity to use all of the combined knowledge and skills they have learned while they are still under the supervision and with the help of an experienced teacher. Graduates typically rate their clinical experiences as the single most valuable part of their

teacher education training.

D. Stricter Certification Requirements

Each state determines its own requirements for teaching certificates issued in that state. In the past few years, states have developed more rigorous certification requirements. Many states presently use the National Teachers Examination (NTE) or some other standardized test as part of the certification process. Reform in this area is most evident. The National Teacher Examination which is now used in 30 states for initial teacher certification is soon to be replaced by its developer, Educational Testing Service, with a radically different test which will evaluate teacher candidates at three different stages in their training. The new test, which is expected to be ready for use in 1992, will perhaps include interactive video, computer simulations of classroom problems, and actual classroom observations as well as other options for test-takers.

In addition, some states are issuing provisional certificates which are followed by more permanent certification after appropriate inservice experience.

E. Mounting Concerns Regarding Minority Teachers

The radically declining percentages of minority teachers has come to the forefront. Today minorities account for only eight percent of the nations public school teachers and that figure is expected to fall to around five percent during the next decade. Teacher education institutions and others are attempting to help alleviate the situation by initiating special assistance programs, alternative entrance requirements, and aggressive recruitment

techniques.

The National Education Association (NEA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) have been working jointly during the past few years to help remedy the lack of minority teachers. They have launched a major study to help pinpoint the causes of the dwindling numbers. The NEA-CCSSO effort will produce data and information which has never been available before, and their findings and recommendations will perhaps have major implications for public policy. Results of the study are due for release soon. It is expected to contain numerous helpful recommendations for changing the public policies which are contributing to the minority teacher shortage.

F. Pairing and Inducting Issues

The next generation of teachers could be greatly shortchanged if the importance of pairing outstanding master teachers with compatible student teachers is not recognized.

First, the school district should identify master teachers and then ask them if they are willing to assume the responsibilities of training student teachers. The ones who accept should then be paired with student teachers in terms of style, approach, and personality.

An effective procedure for teacher induction may be accomplished by extending teacher education into the first year under controlled situations with the responsibility being accepted by teacher education institutions as well as by the public schools. A mentor who is known to be a superior teacher could be assigned to the beginning teacher to provide guidance and support. University support could be provided by field-experience supervisors who provide needed consultation and analysis of teaching. A third area of support might come from peers as the beginning teachers attend seminars which give

them opportunity to discuss problems and concerns with others having similar experiences.

In conclusion, because education serves such an important function in our society, it is likely that it will continue to be the focus of considerable scrutiny. The national reports call for changes in the way we prepare teachers in the United States. If "troubling of the waters" is thought of as a necessary prerequisite for progress, then the future should look bright.

Educators who prepare teachers must not be satisfied with recent progress, but they should grasp every opportunity to improve and to revitalize teacher education. The education reform movement has given new direction; the profession must assure its continuance.

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